

**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Erica Taylor 843-937-6303

# Media Release

## **Pulse of CCSD – Samantha Mumford shares the beauty of music at Alma Mata**

**Office of Strategy and  
Communications**

**Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Erica S. Taylor**  
Chief of Staff

**Charleston, SC** – When Samantha Mumford was a drum major at Wando High School, Band Director Scott Rush suggested she consider becoming a director as well. The thought never occurred to her; as a high school student, she was focused on friends, social aspects of being in the band, and the enjoyment she got from the music. However, Rush, saw her potential immediately.

Mumford eventually took that advice and enrolled in Furman University as a music education major, where she was required to learn every instrument through method instruction and was certified to teach instrumental music to K-12 students.

Initially, Mumford began her educational career as a long-term substitute teacher. A position at Seneca Middle School became available that following year and Mumford built the band program from the ground up, an accomplishment she is proud of.

Mumford was sad to leave Seneca, but a "too good to be true" opportunity presented itself. She was approached by Thomas C. Cario Middle School's Assistant Band Director and was asked to consider returning to the Lowcountry. The deal was made even sweeter when her husband Mason was offered a position as the Moultrie Middle School band director.

Mumford was a band student at Cario under director Jeff Scott. He, too, was interested in having Mumford join his team.

"It was hard to say no to their offer," said Mumford. "I enjoy working with Jeff and learning from him. He feels like family, and I am thankful for his guidance and friendship over the years. He is a fantastic band director. I have learned so much from watching him teach."

Mumford is in her sixth year at Cario. She said that teaching middle school students is interesting.

"They come to us from elementary school where they're still very much a young child," said Mumford. "By the time they're leaving us, they've matured into young adults about to enter high school. This is such a great age to capture students interested in the band because the program provides structure and skills like time management, teamwork, leadership, and accountability. If a student puts the effort in, they'll be more successful in general."

In a normal year, about 70 percent of the student body at Cario is in a music class (band, chorus, or orchestra).

"That shows the support music gets in our community," said Mumford. "In a normal year, we have anywhere from 300-400 students in the band across grades 6-8, which is only about 25-30 percent of the school in band."

Mumford added that Scott has molded the program well.

"It is a well-oiled machine supported by an amazing band booster club and parent volunteers," said Mumford. "Charleston Symphony Orchestra musicians also volunteer, teach, and mentor our students. All of that helps with our success. We're very fortunate."

Mumford said Cario is fortunate to have had Adam Vernon-Young join the band director team last year.

"The three of us work very well together, and that helps the program thrive as well," said Mumford.

Mumford explained that Scott has cultivated an environment where students want to work hard and be successful. Like Mumford, the students want to be good at what they do. She said they take regional and all-state competition auditions very seriously.

The students work very hard, according to Mumford, but they play hard, too.

"Being in the band is quite the social event," said Mumford. "The comradery is the reward for hard work."

The administration and the entire Cario community is incredibly supportive of the band program, Mumford explained.

"I can't say enough good things about our great leader Gayle Morris," said Mumford. "Mrs. Morris was in the band so she is naturally supportive and appreciates what we do. I know if I ask her for help, I'll get it. At Cario, the teachers are willing to help each other. It is a great place to work. The teachers and parents are supportive of each other, and that goes a long way."

"Mrs. Mumford is an invaluable part of both the Cario staff and our band program," said Principal Gayle Morris. "There is no challenge too big for Mrs. Mumford to tackle logically, creatively, and always with the best interest of her students in mind."

### **Reacting to COVID-19**

Children are resilient and quickly got used to the "new normal" as they returned to their school campus this year. Things would look a little bit different for band students, though.

Mumford explained that students had to wear special face masks that enabled them to play their instruments but kept them safe. Classes have also moved outside to ensure social distancing and capacity protocols are followed. On occasion, this means enduring cold and windy weather.

"They have not complained," said Mumford. "They will be better for it because learning to play outside calls for a big, full sound. They are learning how to do this new skill, which will help them to be even more successful moving forward."

Cario's holiday concert was held outside on the big field so families could sit together and socially distance themselves from others.

"It went so well," said Mumford. "We haven't been able to have a concert since COVID-19 shut down school last March. I am glad we did it."

"COVID-19 has forced all of us out of our comfort zones," said Morris. "However, the questions Mrs. Mumford faced was not, 'can we do this,' but rather, 'how can we make this work. Mrs. Mumford is respected and loved by her fellow Cario colleagues. The effort, energy, and care she puts into the program is evident, and the program continues to thrive because of her dedication."

Mumford said she is impressed with the students who came back to band this year.

"They're enjoying each other and their friendships," said Mumford. "They are mastering their instruments and still finding time to have fun."

Outside of the school's band program. Mumford teaches flute lessons to individual students. One of Mumford's flute students is a young lady who came into the program as a sixth grader and is now a junior at Charleston County School of the Arts.

"This student is doing wonderfully, and it has been fun to take her all the way through middle school and now into her final years of high school," said Mumford.

It is relationships like this that Mumford cherishes.

"I find a lot of my passion for teaching band comes from teaching the seventh-grade band," said Mumford. "Seventh grade seems to be the toughest middle school year for many students. It is tougher academically, and social, peer relationships become even more important to them. As a teacher, I really work to develop a trusting relationship with this age group so I can insert life lessons into our conversations. It is so fulfilling to watch them grow into successful, mature eighth graders."

Mumford and her husband have a two-year-old daughter, Charlotte. They're also expecting a baby boy. Her family, she said, is what motivates and drives her to be her best.

"My goal is always to continue to grow as a wife, a mom, and an educator," said Mumford. "My husband is an educator as well, and we both have the same feelings about the things we want to instill in our kids and our kids at school. Being on the same page with my husband as far as values go and having a support system as I have at home gives me the confidence I need to be the best I can be for this band program, Cario, and my students. I am so grateful for that."

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.